

Archaeology News-Bites

Long-term parking at Marseille

The digging of a vast underground car park next to the City Hall in Marseille in the south of France has unearthed the remains of two Greek ships and three Roman ones which were scuttled to make the foundations of a jetty for the ancient docks. The Greek town of Massilia was very important for the ancient wine trade. The Greek ships date from about 500 B.C., but were probably not finally 'parked' until the second century B.C..

Cuprite explains the Shield of Achilles?

Scientists working on alloys of copper are beginning to understand the chemistry of how some Greek and Roman bronze statues have black inlays – a technique known in Japanese art as *shakudo*. It turns out that the inlays are of cuprite (Cu_2O) with particles of silver or gold. The effect can be like that suggested by Homer on the Shield of Achilles in *Iliad* 18, where a gold field shows black as it is turned over by the plough.

Roman forts in Yorkshire and Scotland

Work on the A1 has revealed two forts near Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire. They were probably used in the campaign against the Brigantes between 71 and 85 A.D. The forts found near Falkirk in Scotland seems to have been built about A.D. 150, and abandoned a few years later when the Antonine Wall was constructed.

Capitoline triad lost and found

We know that the seated statues of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, worshipped in the temple on the Capitoline, were regarded as symbols of Rome. A 24-inch-high copy was recently excavated at Guidonia, west of Rome, and was promptly stolen. The Italian police have now recovered it – ready packed for illegal export. Arrest warrants have been issued for 29 suspects.

Thera computer-graphics

The inspiring beauty of the wall paintings from the Minoan town buried by the volcanic explosion of the island of Thera – or Santorini – in about 1625 B.C. is witnessed by our cover photo. Specialists working for the Thera Foundation have used computerised "archaeosynthesis" to produce pictures which show how the paintings originally appeared.

Athens Metro 'Excavations'

As anyone who has visited Athens recently will know, two new underground lines are being excavated. All sorts of archaeological remains are being recorded. The most interesting (so far) are probably those at the new station at Syntagma Square, right in the centre of tourist Athens. These include a workshop for making bronze statues, and a road lined with tombs on either side.